

# Changing Language of Tribal Culture by Contemporary Architecture Study of Bhilalas

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**Abstract:** *The world is witnessing the repercussions of globalization. Consequently, the vernacular form of architecture is rapidly being replaced with new industrial materials such as steel and concrete. It has been observed that when building fails to meet the basic requirements of contemporary standards, conflicts arise. There is a need to increase physical sustainability, restore the buildings cultural character with community partnership and tradition knowledge. Up gradation and adaptive use of locally available material should be encouraged. This topic is to enhance as well as sustain the features & architectural characteristics of the tribal livelihood. It shall happen by fusion of modernism with the orthodox techniques done in the tribal belt of central India by Bhilalas which would sustain the bygone civilization which has survived independently for generations.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Architecture, Tribes, Vernacular Architecture, contemporary

## 1. Introduction

The culture of each society is identified through its manifestations such as language, art, and architecture and analysis in the field of culture is related to the study of cultural manifestations. Changing the cultural and social attitudes in communities has the greatest impact on the Architecture & vice versa. Therefore, the role of Architecture in Augmentation of cultural identity by blending with modernism seems essential. Since India has a rich cultural heritage as well as is known for diversified Tribal cultures and there different type of habitats. The topic aims to study the settlements of primitive tribe – BHILALAS of Madhya Pradesh with an objective to study socio-cultural, economical & architectural aspects which are afterwards influenced by repercussions of globalization. This topic with the assumption that Architecture is a complete symbol of human culture tries to incorporate the traditional knowledge into contemporary designs as the vernacular form of architecture is rapidly being replaced with new industrial materials such as steel and concrete. The topic concludes with learning lessons from Traditional Architecture & its adaptation in modern context.

## 2. Problem

There is a need of protecting the identity of architecture in the built environment based on a theoretical approach and cultural background which allow society to identify their roots as well as express their identity, background and differences from other societies which shall encourage tribes to sustain their civilization & architecture.

## 3. Literature

### 3.1 Importance of tribe in culture

A tribe harbors an environment for generating new ideas for work and life whilst also fostering a sense of community which is vital for a healthy productive life. These groups can provide a sense of purpose, a reason to interact with others and even provide health and wellbeing benefits. Formation

of architectural techniques and cultural Identity in architecture are the considerable components in development of society's culture. People in every country try to follow their norms and maintain their values in making of architecture by applying the material things.

### 3.2 Interconnection of architecture with culture

Even countries which have had many centuries of a profound history in structure and architecture improvement, have sometimes been unable to prevent architectural features from losing their regional character of physical and spatial characteristics of place and culture.

The lack of innovation on architectural technology by the means of constructing cultural character is still perceivable. Constructing the roots of character by tracking on the rise of architecture technology paves the way for arguments, what happened in the past and comments on the present and future.

### 3.3 Art as an element in tribal architecture

Tribal art generally reflects the creative energy found in rural areas that acts as an undercurrent to the craftsmanship of the tribal people. Tribal art ranges through a wide range of art forms, such as wall paintings, tribal dances, tribal music, and so on. They depict stories that are forms of Ramayana, Mahabharata or associated with other Hindu epics. They recount the story about the deeds of gods and goddesses, such as Shiva or Durga from Hindu mythology; or the local deities, such as the snake goddess Manasa. Tribes in their art form also depict the day to day life cycle of their community. Also they depict the importance of forest & wildlife in their livelihood.

### 3.4 Usable past

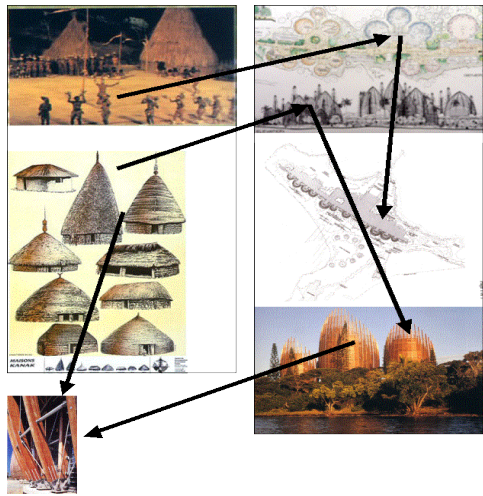
Recapture of architectural characteristics refers to the "theories of cultural identity" such as paradox and paradigm to preserve our culture identity against external pressure from globalization of international architectural character.

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The concept of “usable past” which contributes to cultural identity of the built environment acts as a regionalist to demonstrate the nature of originality in the architecture and urban scale.



### 3.5 Introduction of Tribes of Madhya Pradesh

The majority of the Madhya Pradesh tribes resides on hilly slopes and forested valleys cradled by the sacred rivers of Narmada and Godavari. Besides the historical monuments, ancient temples and boundless natural beauty that Madhya Pradesh is home to, it fosters nearly 46 different tribes that resonate with cultures of different eras.

Each Tribe community has its own cultural identity such as language, dialects, customs, rituals and beliefs. The activities have evolved the necessity of a community space like courtyard and chaupal in the settlement pattern. This resulted in a strong social binding among the community. Each tribe has its own way of settlement pattern on the basis of their culture and lifestyle like Saharia has circular, Bhil has scattered and Korku or Bhilala's has linear.

### 3.6 Who are bhilala's?

The Bhilala are an aboriginal community in the Indian states of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, traditionally believed to have originated from the marital union of Rajput warriors and the daughters of Bhil chieftains. The Bhils/Bhilalas are the third largest tribal group and one of the oldest in India, according to Joshua Project they number around 14 million with 40 percent of them in Madhya Pradesh, 35 percent in Gujarat and Rajasthan and 20 percent in Maharashtra. Bhilala tribal groups are divided into clans, which are each led by a chief who has power over matters concerning clan and caste. The Bhils/Bhilalas merge animism and Hinduism and many are Muslims and Christians. Traditionally, they believed in a pantheon of deities that over time absorbed Hindu gods.

The Bhilala generally live in villages with three to 40 families. Houses have wooden frames, bamboo walls sealed and with cattle dung and roofs thatched with grass or teak leaves.

In the old days the Bhilala were hunters and gatherers but today the Bhil do agriculture, farm work, cattle and farm laborers for others. Also, the Bhilalas have a tradition of making cloth, pottery or metal tools.

Ecological isolation influenced the Bhilalas to remain as cultural isolates. They live in separate hamlets in multi-ethnic villages. Sometimes, they also have two or more hamlets in a single village.

In Halma, a gathering, people from different clans, hamlets, villages & groups gather together to unite against the problem a particular hamlet or community in the group is facing. One of the major festivals of Tribal People Culture is “Bhagoria” begins in Holika seven days before the combustion. Bhagoria is a “Haat Market” where we all meet, many fairs are held in the tribal areas.

### Live case study of basic rules of construction & community living

#### Town Planning

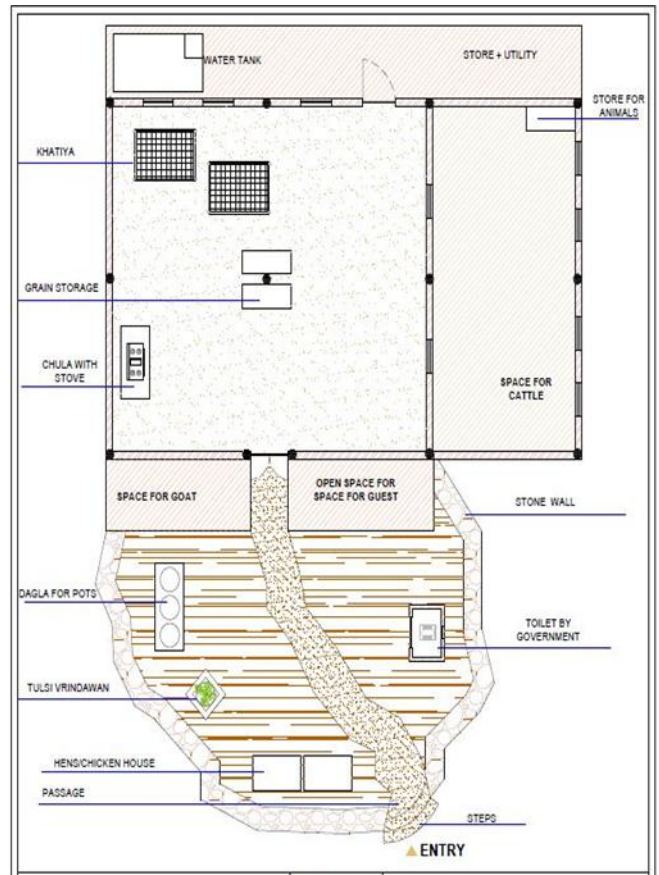
The settlement is connected by the pedestrian pathway to the main road. The houses are oriented towards east, north and west as cluster planning & many times linear planning is also observed. The entrance to the settlement is from the south. The front facades of all the houses are mostly towards the centre. They have a tradition of nuclear family. The nuclear families have a smaller cluster. After marriage, young couple makes a new house for themselves, adjacent to the family cluster or many times away in the forestry, depending on the family structure especially number of brothers. There is a place of worship in the centre of the settlement and adjacent to it is a community space called Choupal, where grandparent looks after their children while parents are working on the fields. It is also a place where people sit together and discuss social and religious matters. A person known as kotval is sent by person to gather people from different dwelling at choupal. It is also used to accommodate the guests during occasions. The settlement utility spaces like a well for drinking water, a small grocery shop for daily needs and they have to go to weekly market called ‘haat’ for major shopping.

#### Basic rules

A person is not allowed to construct his/her home on the right hand side of his/her mother's house. If he/she wishes to construct the house on the same compound, the house can be constructed at the back or left side of the mother's house.

Two homes cannot be so close to one another. In other words, the roofs of two houses cannot overlap one another.

To have all four walls made of stone was not allowed. The timber used in construction should be from not more than one type of tree. No tree should be taken from the sacred forests.



### Dwelling- tapra

The Bhilala dwelling is called Tapra. The houses are rectangular in shape, divided into two parts. One part is used for storage; the other is utilized for cooking, sleeping and the centre there is a niche in the wall for worshipping. A corner of a family courtyard is used for bathing, though they usually take bath at tank, well or a streamlet. They don't have lavatory in the house; they have a tradition to go in the open fields for nature's call, but as toilet have been made compulsory by the government, as per scheme the Nagar Palika is granted amount to construct toilet for individual dwelling. Due to poor planning aspects & negligence of vision the toilets are constructed in house front courtyard itself, which is not at all advisable for hygienic conditions as the small open space in front of a house which is used as courtyard is a multipurpose space used for cooking, drinking water storage, and household work. Boundary wall is made by straws & wood at border of the house. Beside this is a platform for gathering in the open. The functions and aesthetics are closely related to each other. There is no division between the function and the aesthetic, the material and use of it. The walls are of cow dung & painted by natural colors with various symbols.

### Construction & aesthetics

Wooden pitched roof consists of a system of joists, rafters and purlins arranged in the form of a triangular shaped truss. The wooden doors are pivoted, ledged and battened and paneled. Paneled doors made of single plank and carved with the motifs of birds, animals, human figure and geometry design, decorated with the relief work. The Bhilala women besmear the main doorframes, doorsills, courtyard and kitchen with a paste of yellow clay, chalk and ochre. They paint auspicious figures with these materials. The absence of rigid plinth keeps the floor damp. A cattle shed is at the back of cooking area. They also have shed for goats and chickens. Most of the construction is done by stone only. They perform their major activities in open.

### Traditional construction techniques

Multipurpose uses of space make the houses small and economical. The houses are designed with the bare minimum requirements in roof construction, the main trunk of the tree with desired diameter and length is used as the main supports, the smaller pieces of branches as rafters, purlins, battens and the leaves, bushes, grass as the covering material.

Houses are load bearing structure of either random rubble masonry or the wooden straws (Tatta) binded together & mud mortar with husk. They go for shallow foundation because of hard strata. The walls are made up of stones or Tatta, plastered with mud; cow-dung is used as a finishing material. The walls are painted with lime, minerals and herbal colors. In order to prevent clay surfaces from cracking and crumbling a fresh coat of clay and cow dung is applied from time to time.

The relief work is usually done at the entrance and on the walls during the construction of the house, when the wall is wet.

**Negative impacts on tribal culture due to contemporary architecture**

With high development of technology, traditional methods have been neglected over the years. The influence of the western world is one of the major factors that led to such a decline in traditional housing as people are living and being in trend. The connection of tribe with nature has decline & led to crude form of Architecture due to factors like the lack of forest essentials, economical factor and the decline in resources. Due to lack of vision government has also not provided an proper planned built form to them connecting with their culture, harmony with nature & traditional livelihood.



**PMAY RESIDENCE DEVELOPED**



**GOVERNMENT SCHOOL IN TRIBAL BELT**

**Inferences from tribal habitation & contemporary style**

The change in typology of habitats brings a drastic change in the lifestyle of the Tribes. The traditional methods of construction are with harmony to nature as well as many practices in their lifestyle justify it.

Architecturally the change in construction techniques & materials also leads to change in planning aspects of rural livelihood. It generally promotes vertical growth which could be helpful for society in coming future. It helps in there evolution by connecting them with urban living.

To sustain this bygone culture a blending of their traditional practice with contemporary design is a necessity for upcoming constructions. The adaptation of their traditional styles like use of art forms in houses as well as materials like cow dung shall connect them with their livelihood. For Example- Cow dung itself is an useful material for insulation as well as hygienically beneficial by its coating in

flooring as well as walls the material can be re cladded which maintains the hygiene due to renewal as well as acts as an insulation material.

In planning aspects, as we have seen before the tribes have always been in harmony with the living beings as they have always been a part of their living. The type of kitchen & room dimensions shall also be planned as per the family size & lifestyle. The cattle's are always been a part of their livelihood, such things should also been considered.



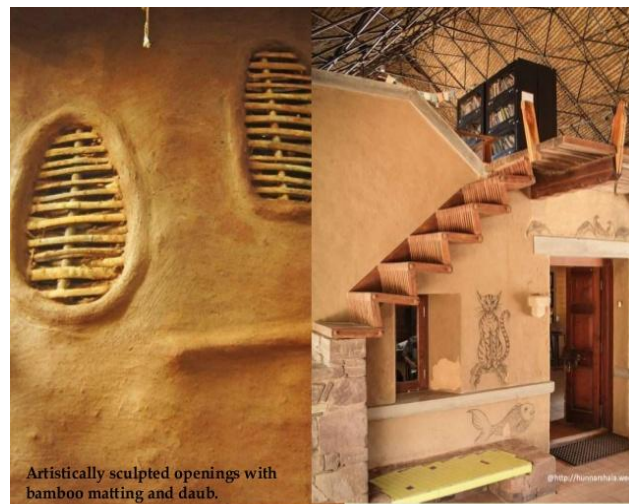
**Fusion of tribal & contemporary!**

**Sustaining the culture in contemporary style**

The diversity of the local culture is eloquent in the way they treat and manage their environment. The built environment is shaped by the values and cultural believes of the community. Globalization has brought a major change in the lifestyle. The patterns of evolution, adapting to the change in traditions therefore it is critical for the continuity of cultures.

In contemporary architecture, it is important to identify the need for human comfort.

As the climate is changing rapidly, the settlement has to be modified and adapted to fulfill the changing needs and lifestyles. The buildings should be climate responsive and energy efficient. It is not advised to shun the tradition completely, continuity with the past is essential for the sustainability of a community as a whole. The focus of ecological sustainability is to create a balance between man and his environment including both natural and man-made. The aim should be to work with nature and not against it.



#### How to revive cultural aspects in contemporary style

Physical sustainability is one of the most tangible forms of sustainability. As the needs and values of the society changes, the buildings either adapt themselves to suit the new demands or neglected or get replaced by the modern ones.

Cultural aspects & Architectural features should be juxtaposed in pursuit of achieving regional character perceived through the elaborated use of historical background in the form of national or local contemporary architecture.

We need to put an effort to create Natural building awareness like experimenting with low embodied energy materials and low tech appropriate technologies. We should work to bring back the indigenous wisdom of ancient practices in modern approach.

#### Promoting tribal cultural tourism

One of the key aspects of survival of any civilization is the system which binds the community together; individual feels proud of it as well as the cultural aspects are recognized & appreciated by others.

Such aspects are generated by encouraging the tribal tourism of central India, which helps one to stay to his roots, increments prosperity by generating revenue via business and increases the scope of work at native place itself thus helping people to survive in the rural places rather than migrating to urban areas.

A proper sustainable model shall be developed by the people which include all the tangible & intangible aspects related to Art, Architecture, culture & livelihood of the society so as to enlighten people about the lifestyle of Bhilalas as well as enjoy it via tourism which shall help them to generate a healthy revenue to practice their own way of living as well amalgamation of modern trends is done with harmony of their origin.

#### 4. Future

No detailed drawing plans are covered as were not available. The scope of study is restricted to bhilala tribes only. Due to multiple invasions & livelihood of tribes in deep forest, they had always been in shadow from the main stream. Therefore the data available is the only one which is passed through verbal due to lack of documentation. With the waves of modernization urban, rural & tribal have connected by

different mediums which help to explore their living but still no written data or chronology is available.

## 5. Conclusions

The data above demonstrate that cultural identity perform as the central mechanism for architectural innovation. Constitution of architectural innovation as mean of creative in contemporary architecture is highly consider and communicate on cultural pattern of society's root. Taking into consideration that architectural innovation and cultural identity are strongly related to one another as the phenomenon. Therefore, these two serve as effective and valuable devices that make improvement to the quality dimension of indicators in architectural innovation. Additionally, theories and concepts related architectural innovation approach to seek and resolve the existing issues in the built environment by identify and analyzing factual of traditional architectural treasure. As a result both, a concept of architectural innovation and cultural identity are directly involving as augmentation of one another. This sustainable augmentation approach offers a potential modernization of Tribal architecture base on the cultural background, which can be more than cultural symbol for any Tribal community like Bhilalals.

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